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1 There is no subject that can be considered by nature "unworthy" of philosophical reflection. This is especially the case for popular culture as it manifests in television series. After all, if we subscribe to Canguilhem's idea that, "Philosophy is a reflection for which all unknown material is good, and we would gladly say, for which all good material must be unknown,"[1] it follows that television series therefore make up an unknown material of this sort. Yet the way in which philosophy relates to series should be established from the outset. According to Stéphane Llerès[2], there are two approaches: Either philosophy itself aims—with largely pedagogic intentions—to demonstrate concepts or problems that it has developed itself through television series, or it aims to offer a philosophy specifically tailored to the series it has taken as a subject of study by creating original concepts designed for the series in question. From this point of view, the series as a generator of ideas has an effect on philosophy. In the following article, we hope to delineate a third approach—one that will be increasingly hermeneutic, producing an experience of truth that concerns the art-object that is the series *Lost*[3].

2 Of course, it is a question of presenting *one* experience of truth, not of carrying out an exhaustive analysis whose target would be to uncover and articulate all possible meanings—a task that could prove unending. Yet among the hermeneutic tools at our disposal to analyze a series, one of the most powerful is represented by the characters, if we think of them not as simple narrative figures subject to psychological analyses, but as small "mechanisms" that produce the serial nature of the series. Each of *Lost*'s characters represents a "becoming-series" for themselves, through which the series as a narrative chain of events escapes all closure. One of the characters is particularly interesting, as a minor character: Hugo (Hurley) Reyes. We argue that he illustrates a stoic direction or tendency that is inherent to the series. Of course, it is not certain that Hugo is an entirely stoic figure, because we find many characteristics or events in

which he is involved throughout the series that could contradict the given image of the stoic sage. Yet it is possible to argue that, to a certain extent, Hurley offers a stoicism that will ultimately be successful in calling into question the figure of the hero itself.

Lost: A Series of Series

3 The series *Lost* is remarkable because it creates many series simultaneously within itself, whether it be through flashbacks or flashforwards, through temporal jumps, through the two possible simultaneous presents in season 6, or even through the repetition of the same event seen from different perspectives—the 48 days experienced by the survivors of the tail of the plane (season 2), or the plane crash as seen by the Others (season 3)—without forgetting the many episodes in which a proliferation of independent actions are set in motion by various characters, thus creating multiple possibilities. By drawing upon Deleuze's ideas in *The Logic of Sense,* Stéphane Llérès reminds us that in this instance, a series is created precisely from this ability to create multiple series, so much so that "the serial form is thus essentially multi-serial.[4]"

4 Henceforth, we must ask what the relationships are among these multiple series and the elements that constitute each of them. In *Lost*, the meeting point between two series—for example, that of the survivors from the front of the plane and those of the tail of the plane, or the encounter with the Others (and Ben in particular)—produces a reconfiguration that tends not toward a homogenization of the two series that meet but, on the contrary, toward an increase in heterogeneity—toward the emergence of new alterities, in the form of new and completely unforeseen initiatives. It thus seems that *Lost* is subject to the logic of series creation put forward by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense:*

> ... [T]he terms of each series are in perpetual relative displacement in relation to those of the other. ... There is an essential lack of correspondence. This shift or displacement is not a disguise covering up or hiding the resemblances of series through the introduction of secondary variations in them. This relative displacement is, on the contrary, the primary variation without which neither series would open up onto the other. Without it, the series would not constitute themselves through this doubling up, nor would they refer to one another through this variation alone.[5]

5 It is remarkable that the series *Lost* does not seem to seek out a focal point from which the different series that pass through it create a sense of coherence and unity that we could call synthetic. It seems that the series has the tendency of increasing its own fragmentation.

6 We can go so far as to note a multiplication of series insofar as the characters in *Lost,* as comprising elements of series, are themselves potential breeding grounds from which new series might spring—so much so that not only do they allow the series for which they are one of the constituent elements to maintain its variation in relation to other series, and thus to maintain certain distances between series so that no convergence may occur, but also to bring variation into the series in which they take part from the inside, so that each series differs from all others, and also constantly differs from itself.

7 Let us draw upon an example. Characters are a source of variation based on their actions, yet it must be noted that their actions never involve the group in its entirety—there are never collective actions taken by the entire group, only ones that involve

small groups or even one character acting alone. Furthermore, this can lead to dilemmas within the decision-making process. (Think, for example, of the first episodes of season 3, in which Jack, Sawyer, and Kate's solitude is represented by the cages in which they are confined.) When communal action begins to take shape, different interpretations of the information to which the characters are privy often leads to multiple initiatives. At the beginning of season 4 (*The Beginning of the End*), when Jack—with Rousseau's help—begins his search for Naomi, who was previously stabbed by Locke, he disagrees with Kate regarding which path they should take. She then decides to act alone, thus creating a parallel series in the search for Naomi.

8 What is the mechanism through which the heterogenous multiplicity of series is produced? What is such a divergence between series based upon, that it complicates the establishment of a common world? What is it that allows difference and variation to repeat continually? Although not all series respond with a system of cross-references and relationships that create a coherent whole—although they ultimately begin, continue, fail, and transform themselves in relation to their own internal logic—all of them aim to bring into play a reality that does not allow itself to be described or understood through the logic of the series; they all aim to deploy a "a very special and paradoxical case... without being reducible to any of the terms of the series or to any relation between these terms. [6]" In *Lost*, this case can be nothing other than the island itself, in relation to which all of the series converge and—at the same time—which maintains their heterogenous multiplicity.

9 The island functions as an enormous reservoir of potentials that generate multiplicity because it "...is never where we look for it, and conversely that we never find it where it is.[7]" This is why it is not certain that the survivors are lacking in character or identity, or that they feel lost *in the beginning*: *In the beginning*, it is possible to assign them a category; they maintain their positions, or their roles, so to speak. On the other hand, that which is impossible to determine, that which evades all definition and situation, is the island itself. This is implied in the episode with the polar bear—the first hint that the island is perhaps not what it appears to be; in other words, that it is not consistent with the image of a mere island of castaways. As stranded survivors of a wreck, the characters are in their rightful place on *an* island; yet it is precisely this particular island that will elude them as an island. In other words, it will not be present to them as an island, so much so that *Lost*'s characters initially feel lost because they cannot seem to be in a *place*. In short, the island "fails to observe its place,[8]" sometimes even literally, as when—as a result of a temporal leap—it disappears from the perspective of the characters still out at sea. It can thus do nothing other than lead to multiplicity, divergence, and difference for those who attempt, nevertheless, to inhabit it. Yet this inhabitation remains impossible, because how can one inhabit that which cannot function as a world?

10 Of course, all of these multifaceted series, all of these divergences, all these differences manifest most notably in the characters, who represent many different patterns of action and who constantly experience the impossibility of consensus. They also embody many patterns of wandering and crisscrossing the island—of noticing the impossibility of the island itself. This is why they all represent, to varying degrees, different levels of dissipation. Some of them hope to fight against precisely this dissipation and fragmentation of the group. It is important to note, at least in the first three seasons, the conflict between two important trends and series: (1) that of dissipation, of the

dispersion of the heterogenous multiplicity that is represented by Locke and Ben, and to a lesser extent, by Sawyer and Kate, and (2) that of unification, identification, order, and solidarity that is embodied by Sayid, and especially by Jack. Jack fights less against Ben's manipulation than against the island to which he hopes to ascribe a function and a place—that of an island that can be left and that will not cease to evade him as long as he has not understood that which Hurley allows him to understand: that power exists in the acceptance of one's own powerlessness.

11 Thus, in the beginning, Jack is the figure of classical heroism itself, simultaneously altruistic and reassuring, yet he will discover, little by little, that the position of the hero—or rather, of the leader—will condemn him to be precisely this even as he tries to avoid it: powerless. One of the series that punctuates *Lost*'s narration is thus precisely that of powerlessness, a series that Jack must navigate until the final ending: that of the watchful eye. Because on this island that is not an island, an eye—open or closed—is all the same.

Hurley, or the Stoic Hero

12 Our previous analysis of this heterogenous multiplicity of series forms an essential backdrop for considerations that take *Lost's* characters as their subject. As a character, Hurley participates in the multiserial structure of the series to the extent that he sets in motion—through his actions and through the flashbacks and flashforwards in which he plays a part—a series among the many that run through *Lost*. Nevertheless, in many respects, he remains a singular figure among the singularities of the other characters. There are at least three reasons for this.

13 First, he is a unique figure because he allows the true *exterior* of the series—namely us, the audience—to appear on the *interior*. In many respects, "Dave" is a sort of metaepisode in which the series turns to look at itself. The multiple series inside *Lost* itself are joined by the multiple series in the minds of the audience watching it. Hurley as a character allows the fiction to also be a metafiction that questions the meaning of the narrative itself: What if the entire narrative of the series were just the wild imaginings of a hallucinating madman? The same can be applied in season 5 ("Whatever Happened, Happened") when Hurley and Miles attempt to understand the temporal leaps and the possible paradoxes that they could create. In an utterly "surrealist," humor-filled dialogue, they voice the following suspicion: Is not the work of the screenwriters completely off the wall, existing outside of all rules of narrative coherence? Hurley's uniqueness thus allows the series to include the ultimate Other: us.

14 The second reason for Hurley's singularity touches upon his way of being itself. Among the multiplicity of tendencies that each character embodies, we noted earlier two more general tendencies—a tendency toward dissipation and a tendency toward unification. To a greater or lesser degree, the actions of each character, embodying and employing their own uniqueness, will tend to accentuate either one or the other of the two general tendencies. Yet it seems that Hurley escapes this dichotomy and represents a third way of being on the island. He accepts—of course, at times against his will—to *suffer*. While other characters seek to regain initiative through their actions in an existence weighted by the foreign presence of the island and while they thus contrast true Exteriority with the consciousness of being able to act in accordance with a will that

calculates and plans (and in this regard, Sayid's character is a perfect example; he illustrates a strategic will), Hurley always sees his plans thwarted when he decides to act.

15 As we are using a hermeneutic approach, we can thus note that the same elements structure Hurley's actions on the island. In "Numbers" (season 1), as well as in "Dave" (season 2), the bags in which Hurley placed the food and water tear. He had hardly begun to act and his plan had already failed. Also in "Dave," as well as in "Tricia Tanaka is Dead" (season 3), the same sequence of events is repeated when Hurley pursues Dave (the character that Hurley hallucinates) in one instance, and, in the other instance, Hurley pursues Vincent the dog holding a piece of an arm in its mouth. Each time, Hurley falls, but there is a logic to it: While on a concrete level these events signify the failure of his initiative, they allow him to continue in a direction he had not initially planned to go. Ultimately, we must note that, broadly speaking, Hurley is one of the characters who is most often in movement and who also gets lost quite easily. For example, in the episode "Everybody Loves Hugo" (season 6), having lost the group, he discovers the cabin. Hugo's movement is erratic because of his impulsiveness—either he pursues something that has appeared, he flees danger, or he moves somewhat blindly—which must be set in contrast with the movements of the other main characters (Jack, Locke, Sayid, Kate, and Sawyer), whose movements have a sense of mastery. They track, hunt, conceal themselves, and attain their objectives without any resistance. But nevertheless, Hurley achieves his goals: He meets Rousseau, he discovers the van, he sets off the dynamite before it is taken, etc. The failure of his plans allows him to succeed, whereas the other characters, whose actions are more successful, fail to achieve their goals. The episode "Tricia Tanaka is Dead" is the key to understanding this paradox, in which failure itself is success and human will, by failing, allows goals to be achieved. The key is the stoic distinction between the *telos* (end) and the *skopos* (goal).

16 Morale is low for the group on the beach since Jack, Sawyer, and Kate have been taken by the Others, and Charlie has just learned that he is going to die. As is often the case for Hurley, the sequence begins with an inciting incident, when he discovers that Vincent is holding a piece of an arm in his mouth. By following him, Hurley discovers the Dharma Initiative van, which gives him the idea of getting it up and running. Here, we will intentionally set aside the parallel series of the flashback in which we learn about Hurley's relationship with his father, as well as the narrative throughline according to which fixing up the van on the island would be to "fix"—so to speak—the abandonment he experienced from his father. In this context, it is only the action that is of interest to us—the fact that Hurley is successful in getting the engine running. The goal (*skopos*) of Hurley's actions is to get the van up and running, but of course, this is not the end. Rather, it is an exerted will in the given circumstances whose aim is completion.

17 Of course, the completion in this context has nothing to do with that of stoic wisdom, and Hurley is far from embodying all of these qualities. Nevertheless, it could be said that he is headed in that direction, as this episode is especially useful in highlighting the specificity of Hurley's actions. The goal that he offers is ultimately a circumstantial, material goal. As such, achieving this goal depends on the circumstances—Hurley's accidental fall, and especially the slope down which the van hurtles. (Whether the van starts running is not dependant on Hurley.) On the other hand, the way in which he

makes use of the circumstances that he encounters is dependent on him. Falling, fleeing, and in this episode, the presence of the van and that of the convenient location of the slope to compensate for the van's weak battery, are all triggers to set him into action. Thus, it is easy for Hurley to represent things—in other words, to represent things as they are without adding false assessments influenced by personal desires. As Epictetus, Hurley might say the following:

> No; but bring whatever you please, and I will turn it into good. Bring sickness, death, want, reproach, trial for life. All these, by the rod of Hermes, shall turn to advantage. "What will you make of death? " Why, what but an ornament to you; what but a means of your showing, by action, what that man is who knows and follows the will of Nature? "What will you make of sickness?" I will show its nature. I will make a good figure in it; I will be composed and happy; I will not beseech my physician, nor yet will I pray to die. What need you ask further? Whatever you give me, I will make it happy, fortunate, respectable, and eligible.[9]

18 One must therefore not be led astray by appearances. While the other characters who assert an oppositional will and hope to change the makeup of the world (in this context, the island) can thus interpret setbacks, unforeseen events, and aggravating circumstances only as obstacles, Hurley is one of the few characters, and perhaps the only character, who does not seek to overcome these obstacles, because there is no reason for them to exist. Henceforth, Hurley is successful in his undertakings. While the goals of his actions are not yet attained, he has already reached his end (*telos*), which is none other than the current state of his action, and thus the exercise of his will. In short, his end is to be an agent of action, and not to produce a result above all else. Could we even go so far as to find here the stoic idea of indifference toward success? Is there, at the very least, an indifference toward the gnostic undertaking in which Jack and Locke are involved, because Hurley accepts how things will be in advance? Whatever the case may be, it seems that he embodies a potential for action in which "the producer is more valuable than their products and projects.[10]" Behind Hurley's blunders therefore, the idea of an increasing form of action than that which develops in reality takes shape. In other words, action "...is superior to all that which can lead to action.[11]"

19 The uniqueness of Hurley's actions paves the way for a completely different relationship to the island—the third reason for his character's singularity. If Hurley's actions do not cease to be successful despite the circumstances, it is because they conform to the order of things. It is for this reason that, within the series, Hurley represents a possible *becoming* for the other characters. Hurley's name is thus one of becoming—a "becoming-stoic." In any case, this will be the path that Jack will end up following, and in a fleeting but beautiful scene in "Everybody Loves Hugo" (season 6), Hurley and Jack's relationship will be turned on its head. Jack will recognize the relevancy of Hurley's attitude and, more important, will become aware of the lesson that Hurley has been teaching him, although Hurley is doubtlessly unaware of his role as teacher. But the stoic philosopher does, after all, teach through actions accomplished, and not by adopting a philosophical position[12]. "Maybe," Jack says, "I'm supposed to let go." In other words: I must adhere to the order of things and want that which the island (Destiny, Zeus, God) wants. To rephrase, he must willingly accept to be carried along. Yet why did Jack miss the idea of joining with this "becoming-stoic," even when he had Hurley right in front of him? Wanting events to happen as they

happen requires two things: knowing how to interpret them and knowing how to be in the present moment.

20 When it comes to the importance of interpretation, we must go back to the episode "Numbers" (season 1). At first glance, nothing seems to go against the theory according to which Hurley actively aligns with the order of things, because he believes in a curse on the numbers that allowed him to win the lottery. Believing in a curse is to interpret events that signal to us. When Hurley meets Rousseau, it is confirmed that the numbers are cursed. Yet what is confirmed, other than an interpretation? And this interpretation is that of an *event-sign* (the numbers) that allows the world to be ordered. What Hurley wants to hear is that the world is not subject to chance—that the things that happened to him did not happen by accident, but rather by a destined chain of events.

21 But the order of things will also operate at a more fundamental level, because it is also in this episode that the two parallel series—that of the island and that of the flashbacks—will meet at an unexpected point that becomes an (and *the*) event: The same numbers are on the hatch that Boone and Locke discovered. For one of the first times, we are aware of the reality of the series of flashbacks that are also present on the island. We could posit that it is this type of simultaneity in *Lost* that creates events—in the narrative sense of the word (that which moves the action forward), but also in the Deleuzian meaning of the word: "The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us. ... It is what must be understood, willed, and represented in that which occurs.[13]" The event is thus that which demands interpretation, because it is that which brings the two into resonance—that which will articulate two heterogenous series. The numbers revealed on the hatch at the end of the episode thus signify that the flashbacks are not elucidations of the characters' psychology, which allow us to understand their behavior on the island, nor are they representations of what causes the events on the island. They help make up both the actions that take place on the island, as well as the reality of the island, in such a way that the relationship between the two series is a relationship of expression, or of quasi-causality to use a technical stoic term. In other words, with "Numbers," the island becomes the element that structures all of the series and creates links among them, paving the way for the understanding that everything that occurs happens as it should happen. In this case, the revelation in season 6 that the main characters are candidates for the island, is simply repetition.

22 Interpretation aside, conforming to the world order requires only recognizing the present as real. If we would like to assign a signification to the fact that Hurley will see and communicate with the dead, other than that of providing narrative momentum, it seems that this capacity assigns him to the space of the present. Indeed, we could think that seeing the dead allows him to anticipate the future, to orient and guide the characters (especially in season 6), but in this context, we could just as easily see an effort of reason to attain a vision of totality in each present moment. Of course, in this case, it is a matter of effort, which is why Hurley is not Jacob and does not have a cohesive vision of events. Yet in carrying out his tasks, he is perfectly aware that an order of things remains and taints both the past and the future with a sense of the unreal.

23 We can thus take a second look at Hurley's "madness." It is this madness, which leads him to be institutionalized off of the island, that becomes the rationality of the world

itself on the island. Through it, he becomes the repository of an intuition that leads him to cross the *apparent* temporal order of things. He thus remains at the point of intensity in which the events no longer follow one another in a temporal succession, but converge in a single moment.

24 Henceforth, it is with relative serenity that Hurley accepts the role entrusted to him at the end—that of becoming the new Jacob. And ultimately, it could only have been he, to the extent that it is he who—from the beginning—is attached to ensuring that his actions are compatible with the world order. He is also the one who, through his ability to create ties of friendship with all the characters, ultimately manages to unify all of the oppositions. His body is thus *large* with all the bridges that he creates, because they do not bear his own personal will. His character is unique as it is ultimately the one that will succeed in making the island a space that can no longer be called an exile from the self. Yet to do this, he will have to critique—often against his will—the heroism of human will. Here, we can turn to the very end of the series. What was it all for? What good is there in believing in heros? There is no such thing, because, sooner or later, we must die—an appalling banality, unless, on one hand we consider that, in *Lost*, it leads to a systemic deheroization of its characters and asks the question of what a television series would look like without heros. And on the other hand, it is on this condition that, "Whatever you give me, I will make it happy, fortunate, respectable, and eligible."

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NOTES

1. Canguilhem, Georges, et al. "Introduction." *The Normal and the Pathological*, Zone Books, New York, 1991, p. 33.

2. Stéphane Llerès, "*Lost*. Le temps, la série," *Implications philosophiques,* December 24, 2012, http://www.implications-philosophiques.org/semaines-thematiques/philosophie-des-series/lost-le-temps-la-serie-i/ (consulted on July 20, 2016.)
3. "The fact that through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all attempts to rationalize it away. ... It is a question of recognizing in it an experience of truth that not only needs to be justified philosophically, but which is itself a way of doing philosophy." Gadamer, Hans-Georg, et al. "Introduction." *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., 2011, pp. xxi-xxii.
4. Deleuze, Gilles, *The Logic of Sense.* Edited by Constantin V. Boundas. Translated by Mark Lester, Athlone, 1990, p. 37.
5. *Idem.*, pp. 39-40.
6. *Idem.*, p. 40.
7. *Idem.*, p. 41.
8. *Idem.*, p. 41.
9. Epictetus, *The Discourses*, III, tran. George Long, chap. 20, pp. 12-15, 1877, www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0237%3Atext%3Ddisc%3Abook%3D3 (consulted November 22, 2020.)
10. Victor Goldschmidt, *Le système stoïcien et l'idée de temps*, Paris, Vrin, 1998, § 73, p. 151. (My translation.)
11. *Idem.*, p. 74, p. 153. (My translation.)
12. See also Epictetus, *The Discourses*, IV, chap. 8.
13. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p. 149.

ABSTRACTS

Lost is a TV series which reflects on the concept of series. I analyse the meaning of this concept; then I suggest that each character personifies a single possibility among a multiplicity of choices regarding what the series might become; I show that the character Hurley is a stoic character and is an alternative model of heroism.

Lost est une série qui propose une réflexion sur le concept même de série. Après en avoir rappelé le sens, nous faisons l'hypothèse que chaque personnage incarne dans la série un « devenir-série ». Nous nous attachons au personnage de Hurley, qui représenterait un devenir stoïcien et offrirait alors un autre modèle d'héroïsme.

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Mots-clés: Lost, destin, stoïcien, Hurley, Hugo, héros
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